## Abstract of the Invention

Methods, data structures, and systems by which entities can efficiently discover, extend, validate and establish business relationships over a digital network are disclosed. A transitive trust system can be utilized by any number of interconnected entities in which at least two of the entities are capable of sharing information. One or more entity trust lists contain, for at least two of the entities, at least one characteristic. Each characteristic can, for example, describe or pertain to the actual or perceived dependability, reliability and/or credibility of an entity. The system also includes at least one transactional trust list that contains at least one parameter relative to an exchange between at least two of the entities through at least one degree of separation between the entities. The transactional trust list can, for example, be a listing of any type of parameters that define or describe business exchanges within a particular industry segment. The transactional trust list can also list information about the types of transactional activities that can take place and proxy actions available to cooperating entities. The system retrieves information from the entity trust list and the transactional trust list in order to provide a framework for at least two of the entities to establish relationships with one another.